

INTERNATIONAL SAFETY BELT

THE whole world's security in the atomic age might be greatly increased by creating what has been called a "safety belt." It would be better described as an international safety belt — and more fully defined as a strategic interlocking of the great nuclear powers, filled by countries which by common agreement would limit the size and arms of their forces, and would not be in military alliance with the nuclear powers on either side.

Such a safety belt might well be extended much further than has been visualized hitherto. Why confine it to West Germany, East Germany and Poland? Many other countries might be glad to come into it eventually, and the extension would be valuable.

It is possible to visualize a Trans-Eurasian safety belt that would stretch from Spitzbergen to the Himalayas — embracing the four Scania countries (Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark); the six central European countries (Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland); the five Balkan countries (Yugoslavia, Rumania, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece); Turkey; and the Middle East countries (Persia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India). The belt might be extended eastward to embrace Burma, Thailand and Indo-China, and then to Japan and Korea. In the West, the three Benelux countries, and others, might choose to join it.

It has long been recognized that the best way to check the spread of a forest-fire, or minimize the risks of an explosion, is to create an inter-space. We should be wise to apply that lesson of experience in the atomic age. Time presses in the Atomic Age.

Proposals for creating an International Force as a help to the preservation of peace have been put forward many times, particularly after World War I. At the Disarmament Conference in 1932, the French proposed the creation of a powerful International Police Force armed with a fleet of bombers to enforce world order. Under their plan, the larger types of bombers, artillery and tanks were to be handed over to this force.

U.N. Forces

After World War II, another grandiose project for an International Force was tabled. In 1945, the victors jointly agreed at the San Francisco Conference that the United Nations should be provided with its own armed forces — to "put teeth" into its Charter. In 1947, the Military Staff Committee produced a report laying down the principles on which this international force should be organized. The report comprised forty-one articles, and the members of the Military Staff Committee succeeded in agreeing on a large proportion of its terms. Unfortunately they agreed that the forces should be composed of separate national contingents instead of being an integrated force directed by a single command.

That decision became an increasing hindrance, as divergence of policy increased, to the formation of any force. Thereafter the idea lapsed until it was suddenly revived, on a more moderate scale, in the Suez crisis of 1956. The

General Assembly on November 3, 1956, passed a resolution, proposed by Canada, asking the Secretary-General to prepare a plan for setting up an "emergency" international force. The plan was approved, and the force formed with a bounding speed — from contingents provided by a number of smaller nations not directly concerned in the dispute.

Even on the small scale of the United Nations Emergency Force, that was sent to Sinai after the Suez clash, it could be of great value. The force would be far more permanent, it would be available at the start of an emergency. Its prime value would not be as a fighting force, but as a fire guard placed between countries that were at logger-heads. It could be called in on the appeal of either, and posted on the frontiers of the other.

The other would be far more reluctant to interfere with such a truly international body than to attack the forces of its hated neighbours. The weakest spot of any force is its administrative area — its supply system, bases, and lines of communication.

By **RUSSELL WARREN HOWE**

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast. — FRENCH-SPEAKING Africa, which is about three times as big as India and Pakistan put together, took a giant step towards the formation of a confederation union, when a group of states at the recent conference here.

The twelve powers which met here last month were Ivory Coast, Senegal, Mali, Volta Republic, Niger Republic, ex-French Congo, Cameroon, Mauritania, Chad, Central African Republic, Gabon and Mali. They cover an expanse of the world's surface running from the arid sands of the Sahara to the mangrove swamps of the Congo delta. If, as expected, Madagascar and Togo join the group, the 14-state bloc thus formed will have a majority among African peoples. The group, which is now known as the "Mali Union," has achieved nationalhood. Members of the bloc will vote jointly in all U.N. assemblies, and will have a common foreign policy. The main aims, however, are a common economic and customs policy, a common currency and common currency regulations. These more complicated "problems will be thrashed out at a further "French-African Summit" in Brussels, capital of the ex-French Congo, in mid-December.

At a third "Summit" in Yaounde, capital of Cameroonia, the 12-14 powers will discuss "harmonization of constitutions." Although a political confederation is not desired, President Félix Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast, the main architect of the union, has convinced his fellow premiers that cooperation at other levels is easier if all the powers have the same, or almost the same, constitution.

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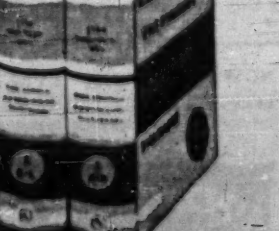
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ation. This is where it is most liable to breakdown, and most vulnerable to interruption by the enemy. The weakness has increased with technical progress — the various types of weapon in any force now run to scores. Its types of equipment, its numbers, and the component parts — to thousands. That complexity, and weakness, would be vastly multiplied in any force composed of national contingents intent to maintain their "national character" — each requiring different ration to feed its men; different spare parts and tools; and each equipped on a different staff system.

A realization of the difficulties that are bound to arise with a national international force points to the advantages of the other form of such a force — composed of men directly enlisted for the permanent service of a United Nations force. It could be organized and trained homogeneously. Its system of command, and its equipment and supply would be uniform, together with its equipment and armament. It would be free from the fetters of national traditions, and could pick the best points of vari-

ation. This is where it is most liable to breakdown, and most vulnerable to interruption by the enemy. The weakness has increased with technical progress — the various types of weapon in any force now run to scores. Its types of equipment, its numbers, and the component parts — to thousands. That complexity, and weakness, would be vastly multiplied in any force composed of national contingents intent to maintain their "national character" — each requiring different ration to feed its men; different spare parts and tools; and each equipped on a different staff system.

By **B. H. Liddell Hart**

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